

Surprise, surprise once again NHTSA has delayed taking action on daytime running lights. NHTSA's stall tactics have only made things much worse. The "light wars" have escalated to the point where many idiots now drive with their fog lights on full time in addition to their stupid daytime running lights. Thanks a lot! What I find especially troubling in NHTSA's latest proposal is that it only proposes to decide whether daytime running lights should be mandatory or optional. What happened to the no daytime running lights option? I have worked in state government for 19 years including the last 11 in new products evaluation. I can smell when a product is specified for political rather than technical reasons and believe me NHTSA's handling of daytime running lights smells real bad. As a professional engineer, I take ethics seriously. I'm sorry that some of my colleagues at my department and at NHTSA's don't feel the same way.

Daytime running lights are not needed and have created more problems than they have attempted to solve. The statistical methods used to support their use are invalid. The odds ratio looks at the ratio of daytime accidents to nighttime accidents. The problem is that it does not distinguish between whether the ratio has decreased due to a decrease in daytime accidents or an increase in nighttime accidents. Many people do not realize that their taillights are not on when their daytime running lights are on. Surely, this has resulted in an increase in nighttime accidents for these vehicles. Since the odds ratio does not distinguish the cause for its reduction, one could erroneously conclude that daytime accidents had been reduced instead.

GM claims that it creates a financial burden to produce two different wiring harnesses for North America. It is a fact that new vehicles sell for much less money in Canada. The difference is significant enough that GM, and other American manufacturers, are trying to find ways to curb the import of vehicles from Canada. The reason given is that the Canadian market won't support the higher prices of the United States. GM is making much more profit on vehicles sold in the United States and we are in effect subsidizing the Canadian market. Why should we subsidize the Canadian market even further just because they have a stupid daytime running light law?

I have a hard time believing that GM's motive is safety and not profit. This is the manufacturer who runs the totally irresponsible Cadillac Escalade advertisements where the SUV goes barreling between two freight trains. I have personally seen this type of behavior transfer to the highway when an Escalade made runs at my bumper and flashed his brights at me because I wasn't passing a car fast enough for him and, after all, all traffic (even trains) is supposed to yield to Escalades. I also have a problem with the irresponsible Toyota Camry SE advertisement where the driver drives totally recklessly on a freeway and spins the car around. I should point out that this car has an off switch for its daytime running lights, but they are on during this commercial. I guess Toyota is saying that if you turn on your daytime running lights, you can drive like a maniac.

The pro-daytime running light lobby has attempted to grasp at anything to justify its position. It's funny how the claims have changed when it was shown that previous claims such as a reduction in side collisions were not proven by the data. The only so-called finding now, that is supposed to be statistically significant, is a reduction in pedestrian collisions. Does this make sense to anyone? We're talking about a small number of accidents that can vary significantly from year to year. The pedestrian always has the right of way, so, like many types of accidents, the key is driver education. Would it have made any difference if the old man, who mowed down the pedestrians in

California, was driving a car equipped with daytime running lights? I don't think so and one incident like that could throw the statistic in the opposite direction.

All of the headlight daytime running lights on the road today give off obnoxious glare. While amber daytime running lights are less offensive, they create new problems such as confusion with turning movements, especially when one light burns out. In short, daytime running lights are not proven to reduce accidents, they are obnoxious, and they should be banned immediately.